

# Socialist Worker

For a Workers' Republic and International Socialism

## Airport Special 10p

# Reject the deal

**FRENCH WORKERS  
SHOW THE WAY**



# This is how to fight

**Special report from Paris**

**You can take on a government and win. That is what French workers showed this week.**

A strike by airport workers forced the Paris government to drop plans for wage cuts and mass sackings (see over).

The lesson is simple. We don't have to accept the rotten deal that is being proposed to us.

### **WHY THE DEAL SHOULD BE THROWN OUT**

**Management are getting nearly everything they want**

\* **PAY:** £21 million is to be saved, and it won't be coming out of the top managers pockets. A pay freeze is being discussed at a tribunal, along with PESP increases.

\* **REDUNDANCIES:** The deal accepts 1,280 jobs will be lost. Already 780 redundancies have been taken, although cynically management are withholding the payouts to 500 until new work practices are agreed.

\* **EXTRA WORK:** Every section of airport workers is being told that they will have to work harder. Clerical workers, caterers, baggage handlers, and

TEAM are all being told to accept new work practices.

**These attacks are not worth the minor concessions management have made. The deal should be fought.**

If money is needed for Aer Lingus, there is plenty to be found in the pockets of the bosses.

Inbucon Ireland has shown that company executives are awarding themselves pay rises

that are three times the rate of inflation.

Executives of companies which have a turnover of over £100 million get a salary of £80,525.

Workers have made sacrifice after sacrifice in hope of creating jobs and saving companies.

It has not worked. Now it is time to make the bosses pay.

**HOW TO WIN - TURN OVER**



# French workers show the way to win



AIR FRANCE workers celebrating their great victory on Monday

**FRENCH WORKERS** have shown how to fight—and how to win.

Striking airport workers have forced the country's Tory government into a complete climbdown over plans to push through mass sackings and wage cuts.

When the strike began last week the government vowed to crush the resistance.

Transport minister Bernard Bosson insisted the plan to sack 4,000 Air France workers and impose huge wage cuts on the remainder was "irrevocable".

The government declared that "it is not possible to negotiate".

## Rich benefit from sacrifices

FRANCE'S TORY government, elected in March, plans to privatise 21 state owned industries and push through mass sackings and wage cuts.

Dole queues in France have grown by 10 percent in the last year. Industrial production is 3.5 percent

lower than this time last year.

Tory prime minister Édouard Balladur says the economic crisis means "everyone must make sacrifices".

But, like here, it is workers who must make the sacrifices while the rich continue to get richer.

## Special report from Paris

When thousands of workers occupied runways at Paris's two main airports the government sent in the CRS paramilitary riot police and said it would clear the workers "by force".

But on Sunday the government did a complete U-turn.

It abandoned the

sackings and wage cuts and called for "social peace". Air France boss, Bernard Attali, was forced to resign.

What changed the Tories' tune was militant strike action which threatened to involve

other workers.

The workers' victory has terrified French bosses. Their daily paper, *Agefi*, panicked. "Giving in to the strikers may encourage other militant action."

One striker summed

up the lesson of their victory. "We forced the government to back down. Action brings results."

*Socialist Worker* reports on the background and lessons of the victory.

## 'We've had it up to here'

A STRIKING airport worker told the French paper *Le Monde*, "We've had it up to here. [Air France boss] Attali is a shit, which is why he's come up with this shitty plan."

"It would be impossible to live on the wages they want us to accept," said another.

"We work day and night, Sundays and holidays, in the rain and snow and now they tell us we have to accept 20 percent wage cuts!"

Another worker agreed, "We aren't like those at the top who are too used to sleeping in silk sheets!"

*Le Monde* described the scene in the terminal: "The strikers are the total masters of the place."

"In the hangars are six Boeings. Their engines are turning, however. The strikers say it is to make sure the electric circuits stay dry and to stop the risk of rust and corrosion."

"We look after them well," said a striker.

"Urgent freight items, like live animals, medical supplies and blood, are moved despite the strike. The rest, though, waits."

The government caved in to the strikers on Monday but they demanded more.

On Tuesday they stayed out, joined by pilots, workers on Air Inter and other airport workers.

The decision to fight on was against the call by union leaders to end the action.

A 5,000 strong mass meeting on Tuesday took place on the airport runway. Workers demanded written guarantees of no job losses, no prosecutions of arrested strikers and pay for the days on strike. They chanted, "Bosson out", demanding the head of the transport minister.

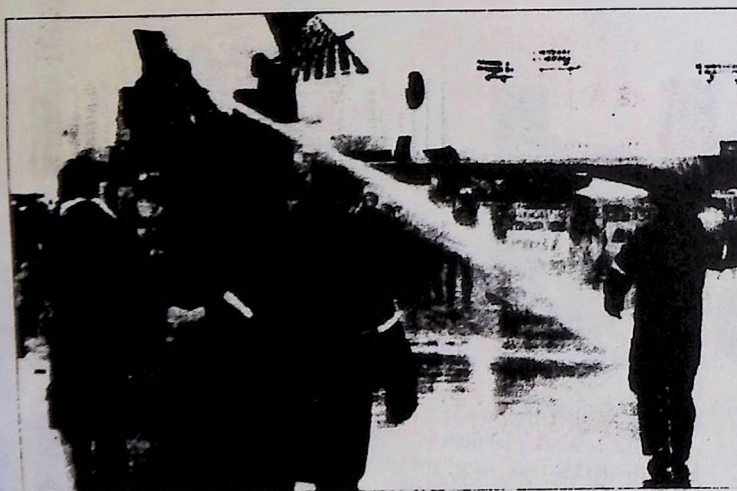
After the meeting strikers set off to march on Paris in celebration of their victory. One striker said to loud cheers, "Let's march down Grand Army Avenue because we are a Grand Army and let's go through the Arc de Triomphe because we won."

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## Militant action won victory



WATER CANNONS and teargas could not shift the strikers, who were gaining more and more support

THE AIRPORT workers' strike began over the same thing facing workers across Europe: government and bosses telling workers they have to pay for the economic crisis.

Air France, the country's main airline, was losing over £6 million a year.

The only answer, the Tories said, was a "restructuring plan" which meant sacking 4,000 of the 6,000 workforce and wage cuts of up to £80 a week.

The strike centred on the ground staff at Paris's two main airports, Orly and Charles de Gaulle, and began when airport workers joined a day of action by public sector workers last Tuesday week.

Hundreds of thousands of workers struck and tens of thousands joined demonstra-

tions across the country in the biggest day of strikes for years.

Three quarters of postal workers and telecom workers struck as did many civil servants, rail workers and Paris metro and bus workers.

Air France workers blocked approach roads to Charles de Gaulle airport before marching to join a 30,000 strong demonstration.

Over the next few days thousands of workers occupied runways, bringing alms, all flights to a halt.

### Popular

The government used force to try and break the strike. But workers fought back. Thousands of workers blocked motorways.

Delegations of rail, tube and telecom workers visited the strikers. Rail workers stopped some of the special trains which the government used to try and undermine the strike.

On Monday farmers, who are fighting the government over its agricultural policies, gave food to the strikers.

The government tried to turn public opinion against the airport strikers.

But the strike was popular with millions of workers who face the same kind of attacks. Even air passengers expressed support for the strike.

## A revolt from the bottom

THE ANGER and militant action pushed union leaders into calling solidarity strikes.

The two biggest union federations called action by other airport workers for Tuesday.

And 40 unions across the public sector announced a day of action against the government's privatisations, sackings and wage cuts for 18 November.

The prospect of widespread strikes meant that the French press has al-

ready dubbed "a winter of discontent" scared the government.

Union leaders too were worried. "The longer this goes on the less we can control the situation," panicked Francois Cabrera, secretary of the CFTD union federation at Air France.

### Driving

As a member of *Socialist Worker's* sister organisation explained, "It was a massive revolt from the bottom. The

driving force in the strike was people not in unions."

And *Le Monde* reported, "union leaders are trying hard to limit the action, but the workers' anger is enormous."

The government first tried to end the airport strike by offering small concessions.

But the workers refused to settle for less than complete victory.

It bodes well for the huge day of action planned for 18 November.